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James Speed Rogers, 1891-1955

With the passing of Doctor James Speed Rogers, at the relatively early age of 63, the world has lost the leading student of the biology and ecology of the Tipulidae, largest family in the order Diptera (over 11,000 species). Dr. Roger's longtime associate, Dr. Theodore H. Hubbell, present Director of the Museum of Zoology at the University of Michigan, has prepared a detailed account of his life and work.¹ In the brief space available I am able to note only a few points of general and personal interest in the career of this outstanding worker and dear personal friend.

Dr. Rogers, affectionately known to his close friends by his middle name of "Speed," was born in Dayton, Indiana, November 4, 1891, son of the Reverend Mr. Henry Martyn Rogers and Alma Goodloe (Smith) Rogers. He died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart ailment at Ann Arbor, Michigan, on May 17, 1955. Following his high school days, he briefly attended Hanover College, Hanover, Indiana, later going to the University of Michigan from whence he received successively the degrees of A.B. (1915), A.M. (1916), and Ph.D. (1930). From 1919 to 1922 he was on the staff of Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa, which he left to become Professor of Biology at the University of Florida, from 1922 to 1946. In 1946 he was called to his Alma Mater to become Professor of Zoology and Director of the Museum of Zoology, a position that he held to the moment of his decease. On April 18, 1918, he was married to Miss Irene Russell, whom he had known in his college days,

¹ HUBBELL, THEODORE H., James Speed Rogers, 1891-1955. Report of the Director, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan 1954-1955, pp. 8-19, portrait; 1956.

and who survives him, together with his two children, Dr. James Speed Rogers and Mrs. Irene Russell Howard. At the time of his passing he was a member of several of the leading entomological societies.

Although his studies on the biology of crane-flies occupied virtually all of his research time, he prepared, with Drs. Hubbell and Byers, one of the outstanding university texts, "Man and the Biological World."² His published papers on the Tipulidae, 18 in number, have been listed in the Bibliography prepared by Dr. Hubbell. To this record one further article that had been omitted inadvertently, should be added.³ While all of the papers that he wrote on the biology and ecology of the Tipulidae are important, three are so outstanding that they must always rank as models in their treatment of the subjects.⁴

At the time of his passing, Dr. Rogers had some further papers in various stages of preparation, one of which (on *Lipsothrix sylvia*) was completed by his student, Dr. George W. Byers. Others are sufficiently advanced that they may be reviewed and eventually published. However, as is so often the case with outstanding workers who are overwhelmed with other duties, the great mass of his observations remains unpublished, and very many, perhaps the great majority, of his numerous observations passed with him. There remain, however, carefully prepared field notes, voluminous records, and an unparalleled collection of the immature stages in the family, which will provide the basis for future work on the subject.

² ROGERS, J. S., with T. H. HUBBELL and C. F. BYERS. Man and the Biological World. Ed. 1, pp. x-607, 180 figs.; 1942. Revised Ed. 2: xiv-690, 375 figs.; 1952. McGraw Publishing Co. A Spanish translation by R. Muratorio was published in Buenos Aires in 1946.

³ ROGERS, J. S. Descriptions of the immature stages of some New Zealand crane-flies: Part 1. Trans. New Zealand Inst. 58: 301-309, 14 figs.; 1927.

⁴ ROGERS, J. S. The summer crane-fly fauna of the Cumberland plateau in Tennessee. Occas. Papers Mus. Zool., Univ. Michigan 215: 1-60, 5 pls.; 1930. The ecological distribution of the crane-flies of northern Florida. Ecol. Mon. 3, No. 1: 1-74. 25 figs.; 1933. The crane-flies (Tipulidae) of the George Reserve, Michigan. Misc. Publ., Univ. Michigan 53: 1-128, 8 pls., 1 map; 1942.

Additional to his great work on the immature stages of crane-flies, Dr. Rogers later in his career became intensely interested in problems of subspeciation, clinal distribution, and comparable aspects, and in his attempts to solve some of the problems that are found here, built up a vast collection of the adult flies in this group. He once told me that he wished he could secure 10,000 specimens of every species. Dr. Hubbell estimates that the collection may include 100,000 pinned specimens of the adult flies, with between 400,000 and 1,000,000 still in papers, accompanied by more than 7,000 microscope slides showing the critical structures needed in classification, particularly the wings and male genitalia. The vast bulk of this unparalleled collection is from the United States and Canada and many, if not the greatest proportion thereof, were collected by him while on his various field excursions. A fuller account of this outstanding work is included in Dr. Hubbell's paper.

Very early in our careers, Speed and I were attracted to one another through our mutual interest in the crane-flies, and it was soon decided that he would devote his principal energies to the biology and ecology, while I hoped to give more and more of my time to a taxonomic study of the group. To further this arrangement, I at once turned over to Speed my extensive collections of the immature stages of crane-flies that had formed the basis of my report "The crane-flies of New York, II, Biology and Phylogeny." Even at that early period, Speed once wrote that "he hoped that some day the two of us might perhaps live sufficiently long to make this group the best known of all the families of the Diptera."

Because of our wide geographical separation, we had very few opportunities to meet or to enjoy joint field trips. Two outstanding meetings may be mentioned. In June 1921 we enjoyed a two-weeks' collecting trip across southern Indiana, beginning at Hanover, the family home, continuing westward across the southern counties to New Harmony on the Wabash River. This trip was rich with happy experiences for both of us. It was at New Harmony that we had the good fortune to locate many hitherto unknown data concerning Thomas Say,

which were later used by Weiss and Ziegler in their classic account of the subject.⁵ In July 1928, prior to the meetings of the Fourth International Congress of Entomology at Ithaca, N. Y., the late Dr. Fred W. Edwards of London, England, with Mrs. Edwards, visited us at Amherst for one week, and Speed came from Gainesville, Florida, for the occasion. Most enjoyable and profitable field excursions during the days, and happy evenings spent around a table pinning and papering the collected materials, provided all of us with unforgettable memories. During that time a vast range of subjects relating to the Tipulidae came under review, adding to a better understanding and appreciation for all of us.

Speed Rogers developed various students of crane-fly biology and ecology, both at Florida and later at Michigan. The more outstanding of such students include Drs. R. E. Bellamy, George W. Byers, Dennis Hynes, and Benjamin Foote. It is expected and believed that these students will carry the Roger's tradition, as it concerns the Tipulidae, far into the future. To persons such as myself, who have been privileged to a long association with Speed Rogers, a simple expression of appreciation and thanks seems quite inadequate. It is certain that the lives of all of us were vastly enriched by this association and by the priceless friendship of a great and kindly man.

The accompanying portrait of Dr. Rogers was taken by Dr. George W. Byers, in the Museum of Zoology at Ann Arbor, within a few days of his death.

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⁵ WEISS, HARRY B. and GRACE M. ZIEGLER. Thomas Say, early American Naturalist, pp. xiv-260, 27 illustrations; 1931. (Reference, p. 231.)